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Letter dated 24 April 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of an analysis entitled "Best practices in countering suicide terrorism" prepared by the Meeting of Heads of Special Services, Security Agencies and Law Enforcement Organizations (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council, and of the General Assembly under item 108 of the agenda.

(*Signed*) P. **Iliichev**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 24 April 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and Russian]

Meeting of Heads of Special Services, Security Agencies, and Law-Enforcement Organizations

Best practices in countering suicide terrorism

As of today, terrorism is still posing a persistent threat to the security of individual persons, society and the State. The tactic of using suicide operatives in terrorist attacks has become a common phenomenon in different parts of the world.

The following suicide attack scenarios are the most common:

- attacks planned and perpetrated by stand-alone terrorists ("lone wolves") whose motivations may vary as they are conditioned by the extent of individual radicalization and susceptibility to pseudo-ideology;
- terrorist attacks masterminded and operationally directed from within the ranks of international terrorist organizations based abroad (in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere) and perpetrated by operatives purposely deployed from the ongoing conflict zone to their countries of origin after having gained subversive expertise when fighting on the side of international terrorist groups;
- terrorist attacks masterminded and operationally directed from abroad (Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan etc.), and perpetrated by one or several sleeper cells whose members do not yet have combat experience with international terrorist organizations;
- terrorist attacks perpetrated by one or several individuals, either related or personally acquainted, who form the mainstay of small groups striving for credibility with leaders of international terrorist organizations as a guarantee of future deployment to a conflict zone abroad.

Some terrorist organizations view this tactic as one of the most effective instruments for attaining political goals. The spectacular terrorist attacks in New York (11 September 2001), Paris (13 November 2015) and Istanbul (12 January 2016), in which a suicide element was involved, are examples of that.

It is also of note that many of the modern-day terrorist organizations have been actively seeking chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons or related components; due to that circumstance, the possibility of suicide operatives being deployed in combination with the use of materials of this kind should never be ruled out.

An analysis of best practices derived from the routine experience of a number of national counterterrorism stakeholders was helpful in forming a comprehensive view of how security, intelligence and law-enforcement authorities counteract the practice of "suicide terror", which is so widespread among international terrorist organizations nowadays.

1. Those most susceptible to the ideology of ethnically- and religiously-motivated violence are: young people with an "underdeveloped" world view, who are inapt or reluctant to get integrated into society; individuals coming from socially-unprotected strata, whose urge to be involved with terrorism could be explained by a desire to support their relatives financially and materially with

incentives provided by terrorist organizations, rather than by religious fanaticism; and individuals previously convicted of committing serious crimes. Together, they form a recruitment base for terrorist organizations. According to **Kazakh** experts, youth is most susceptible to the ideology of ethnically- and religiously-motivated violence. Individuals of this category often develop radical views due to their belonging to socially-vulnerable ethnic groups/minorities of low socioeconomic status, combined with a lack of self-actualization opportunities and religious illiteracy.

2. The individuals most typically selected for carrying out suicide missions may be basically categorized as: adherents to extremist religious teachings; supporters of right-wing radical and leftist organizations; separatists; and relatives of killed militants who, according to "blood feud" traditions as well as religious dogmas instilled by extremists, have a personal obligation to avenge their kinsmen. According to **Sudanese** experts, despite the difficulty of uncovering those people, professionalism and accumulative experience can help in doing so.

3. The following methods and techniques are most commonly used by terrorist organizations for the purpose of recruitment (including in a suicide operative capacity): sparking religious and ethnic intolerance; ideological indoctrination, including from a remote location (either by telephone or via the Internet); portraying terrorists in a positive light; material incentives; and creating a certain image of a perceived enemy. According to experts of the **People's Republic of China**'s Ministry of Public Security, terrorist organizations typically use Internet-based facilities for the dissemination of audio and video materials or musical recordings for the purposes of recruitment; Internet-based forums/platforms as well as mobile communications features are also used directly, when making contacts with recruitment targets or for other operational purposes. Terrorist recruiters gradually instill terrorism/extremism-supportive views in the mind of a target/"martyr" candidate, who is also being tactically instructed and directed to carry out a suicide mission afterwards.

4. The main factors facilitating the emergence and spread of suicide terrorism are as follows:

(a) terrorist groups and their financial benefactors, being keenly interested in promoting suicide terrorism, allocate considerable funds for the selection and training of *shaheeds* (martyrs), given that their attacks normally receive the broadest coverage in the media, evoking general panic and producing a negative impact on public morale; moreover, incidents of this type are very difficult to investigate; as **Romanian** experts pointed out, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) chooses this modus operandi in Syria and Iraq to have overall control and uses terror to achieve this purpose;

(b) experienced terrorists apply previously-tested selection ("talent spotting"), recruitment and training techniques with respect to prospective candidates for suicide missions, and also employ special methods of psychological indoctrination at the training camps set up for that purpose. According to **Serbian** experts, apart from a classical recruitment approach, based on exploiting the personal vulnerabilities of the members of a specific target group, terrorist organizations, relying on direct contacts via the mass-media and the Internet (social networks), as well as mobile messaging services, are finding ample opportunities to evoke the sympathies of certain individuals who are to be radicalized and recruited as suicide operatives;

(c) a growing number of individuals have an explicit desire to commit a suicide bombing attack, influenced by ongoing conflicts in Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan, broad dissemination of radical religious ideology, widespread video-

and audio-propaganda of terrorist attacks perpetrated by suicide operatives, along with a variety of other motivational factors typical of persons determined to commit suicide (living below the poverty line, incurable disease, depression, serious mental disorder, revenge etc.). According to **Hungarian** experts, as a result of radicalization via the Internet, there has been a significant increase in the number of people holding extremist views who can be trained by the terrorist organizations to commit suicide attacks, since they are not suitable for performing tasks requiring a higher level of capabilities.

5. The principal sources of financing of the international terrorist organizations making use of suicide operatives are: self-financing, based on the ISIL model (oil trade, levying taxes upon the population, smuggling, kidnappings for ransom); external support from state actors/governments exploiting terrorists as tools in attaining political goals; private donations (on the part of terrorist "sponsors", relatives of terrorists etc.). According to **Spanish** experts, in respect of this issue a distinction needs to be made between funding received from conflict zones, where terrorists operate more or less freely, and resources received from the West, where they are forced to develop a system of illegal money collection, including inside the Muslim community, and must hide its true purpose, which is to provide funds to terrorist groups.

6. The principal means of counteracting the use of suicide operatives by international terrorist organizations are as follows: promotion of international cooperation; improvement of counterterrorism legislation; countering the spread of terrorism-supportive ideology; timely identification of individuals with the potential for the commission of suicide attacks; elimination of conditions facilitating the spread of terrorism (preventive diplomacy or public outreach). **Slovene** experts, referring to the principal means of counteracting suicide terrorism, mentioned effective cooperation of all competent institutions at the national level as well as active and close international cooperation in the fight against terrorism. According to experts from the **United Arab Emirates**, the prohibition of suicide in Islam is an important means of institutional counteraction.

7. The following measures are believed to be the most effective in terms of counteracting terrorist groups and organizations making use of suicide operatives: expanding the scope of international cooperation facilitating the design of mechanisms for joint counterterrorist activities; developing a zero tolerance attitude towards terrorism among the general public, while broadening opportunities for receiving counterterrorism-related information from the public; organizing effective counteraction of the use of the Internet by international terrorist organizations as a medium of propaganda, proselytism and recruitment; detection and suppression of the activities carried out by emissaries (foreign agents) of international terrorist organizations, while endeavouring to discredit these activities; and building stronger capabilities for the proactive suppression of terrorist plots. According to **Slovak** experts, the most effective measures include strengthening international cooperation of security and intelligence services, sharing information on the use of the latest information technologies by terrorists, de-radicalization programmes, increasing public awareness and uncovering trafficking in arms.

8. The measures found to be most effective in terms of countering citizens' involvement in terrorist activity in a suicide operative capacity are as follows: strengthening cooperation with governments of foreign States and non-governmental organizations; improving basic standards of living and education of the population; imposing harsher regulatory and legal restrictions with respect to individuals involved in the preparation for and perpetration of suicide terrorist attacks; fostering the efforts of civil society institutions focused on enhancing public awareness of terrorism-related threats ("conscience awakening"); counter-propaganda activities

conducted on a regular basis and on a large scale; thwarting of efforts to exert an ideological influence on society; and exercising supervisory control over the education of imams and designing a set of criteria for assessing the level of their compliance with professional requirements. According to **Bulgarian** experts, measures for prevention of radicalization should include the involvement of educational institutions, social services, denominations, local authorities and communities, as well as counteraction of the narrative of terrorist organizations. Another important measure is a systematic enhancement of the expert capacity of law-enforcement bodies and intelligence and security services in the identification of terrorists, achieved through training, drills and information exchange and sharing of experience with partner services.

Thus, an impressive system of measures to counter suicide terrorism is being developed today. However, in view of the actual level of threats posed by this type of terrorism, which remains persistently high, there is a necessity to continue building on efforts in this regard.

Given that it is practically impossible to effectively forestall the actions of a suicide operative at the stage of perpetration of an attack, and the consequences of every "successful" attack are typically devastating, the primary efforts should be focused on preventive outreach work within the social milieus from which the ranks of suicide terrorists are replenished, as well as on detecting any indications pointing at preparations for terrorist attacks against specific targets. In this context, the activity of security and intelligence agencies should be based on an integrated approach, encompassing all the elements of the relevant system of countermeasures, namely: general (proactive) prevention of suicide terrorism; measures aimed specifically at the detection and suppression of terrorist activity involving a suicide element; and implementation of other measures of a managerial, institutional, legal and operational type as appropriate.

Most of the partners share the view that counteracting suicide terrorism necessitates drawing on the entire potential of security, intelligence, law-enforcement and other authorities participating in counterterrorism, as well as of civil society at the national, regional and, most importantly, international levels.